

AFTERWORD: WALK LIKE AN EGYPTIAN

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Let Rome in Tiber melt, and the wide arch
Of the ranged empire fall! Here is my space.
Antony and Cleopatra, 1.1.34–35

I'd like to use this space to talk about space.

Reading the fascinating work of Bryan Reynolds and his fellow transversal “movers and Shakesers,” I am struck by the plangency of two related keywords that appear throughout *Performing Transversally*: “territory” and “space.” The contributors’ express desire to move beyond “the cartography of subjective territories” (379) into “transversal territory”—a location that overlaps with the realm of “Shakespace” in particular, and the confederation of “articulatory spaces” in general—gives some suggestion of how *Performing Transversally* clears new ground in Shakespeare studies by metaphorically constituting “ground” itself as the basis of its theoretical challenge. Yet the spatial tropes that underwrite these and the book’s other articulations of transversal theory warrant some critical scrutiny. What and where, exactly, is transversal “territory”? In what sense is transversal “territory” really “outside” subjective “territory”? How far does one have to move, and how much does one have to shake, to get there?

Off the map: space and practice

The tropology of topology is not anything new in Shakespeare studies; indeed, it has become a recurrent if occulted feature of the field’s mainstream historicist lexicon. Shakespeare scholars are now thoroughly habituated, if unself-consciously, to the vocabulary of ideological “sites”

and discursive “terrains.” Even historicism’s infamous model of “subversion and containment” is a spatializing hermeneutic: echoing the Cold War strategist George F. Kennan’s 1947 article on “containing” the Soviet threat, historicists have often located subversion as a *topos* as much as a practice—Edmund Spenser’s Ireland, Thomas Harriot’s Virginia.¹ This locative tendency is most evident in Steven Mullaney’s *The Place of the Stage: License, Play and Power in Renaissance England* (1988). As the book’s subtitle makes clear, Mullaney’s is an argument about the politics as well as poetics of early modern space. The drama of the public stage, in his influential account, capitalized on its geographical as well as cultural marginality, inasmuch as the playhouses were situated in the Liberties, a zone of subversive “ambivalence, paradox, and cultural contradiction” beyond the jurisdiction of London (31). This narrative might seem to have something in common with transversal theories of space: the Liberties were for Mullaney territory “outside” the interpellating machinery of the city. Like much historicist scholarship, however, *The Place of the Stage* offers a largely synchronic conception of space. At the beginning of the book, Mullaney helpfully yet tellingly provides a *map* of early modern London and the Liberties. His map undergirds a larger project of cultural cartography that works to reconfigure Renaissance power and subversion within a spatialized grid, whereby authority is placed “here” and subversion “there.” In the process, Mullaney’s mapping of power eschews temporality: the place of the subversive stage has a decidedly static quality, situated as it is in the freeze-frame of a spatialized historical “moment.”²

And this is one way in which *Performing Transversally* offers something radically new. “Transversal territory” is not a fixed space that can be located on a map: the ground it occupies moves and shakes. Little wonder that in his introduction, Reynolds includes “terrorist attacks” and “natural catastrophes” in his list of transversalizing spaces. How can a static map represent the convulsions of terrain that characterize an explosion or an earthquake? As Reynolds argues, “transversal territory is a boundless space of metamorphosis” (5). “Shakespace” is “Shake Space”; but it is equally “Shakes Pace,” keenly aware of its own velocity or dynamic movement into the future. And that lexical indeterminacy itself conveys something of the impossibility of pinning down transversal “territory.” “Shakespace” is continually transformed, over time and even within any one essay—as D.J. Hopkins and Reynolds show in their brilliant chapter on Robert Wilson’s (or is it Wolfgang Wiens’s? or Shakespeare’s? or Lou Reed’s? or Hopkins and Reynolds’s?) *Hamlet: A Monologue*, a performance piece that self-consciously displaces drama’s